g
ender equality

Practical guide for delegates
Gender inequality in the different areas of society is a challenge which has become worse with the globalization of the economy.

The role of trade unions is fundamental in setting the bases of a new society, more inclusive and fair to all its members. The training of social actors is a key tool to these changes.

In the following pages you will find information and activities you can use as material in training sessions, meetings or debates of your trade union organizations.

Their objective is not to limit the diverse topic of gender equality, but to provide delegates with a basic tool to plan activities and share with them additional information for the activities. Therefore, in the last section of the guide you will find a list of resources for further information.

We hope this material will be useful and that we will gradually have a larger team of people who work for a more egalitarian world.

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The material included in this guide was conceived to be used in meetings, training sessions and debates in trade unions. The proposed activities in this manual are to be carried out in groups.

The methodology is better placed in a workshop as opposed to a conference, although the information provided could eventually be used as a trigger to develop a conference.

The objective of the workshop is to allow participants to share experiences, and discover attitudes and concepts autonomously. This type of learning is more productive than that of a seminar or conference since whatever we learn by ourselves is more easily remembered than what other people teach us.

The activities should be coordinated by a person who will introduce the topics and will supervise the development of the activities. Furthermore, this person will encourage all members of the group to participate actively; moderate the debates; negotiate when conflicts arise with a view to reaching an agreement; and make sure everybody can have the floor (there are often, in groups, leaders or people who interrupt others or are the center of attention; this needs to be addressed).

The workshop should start with an introduction by each participant. The coordinator will then make an introduction of the objectives of the workshop and the topics to be discussed. It is recommended to leave the results of group activities in a visible place; so that they may be used in other activities and to carry out evaluations at the end of the workshop.
**gender equality?**

Gender equality implies equal opportunities, treatment, education, health, access to work and equal work conditions for men and women. UNI and its Equal Opportunities Department consider gender equality as a human right, a value and a cornerstone for the development of any society.

However, this does not mean that our actions and policies are only aimed at the promotion and improvement of the quality of life of women, and related issues. We also work to revise and modify the cultural structures that reinforce the differences and create discriminating and excluding attitudes (gender perspective).

Mainstreaming gender equality means revising established viewpoints, examining policies and actions taking into account their possible contribution to inequality, and making women’s issues visible so that they are taken into consideration by all areas and actors in society.

In other words, we need to address gender equality as a cross cutting issue that permeates all actions aimed at improving our societies.

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**A current challenge**

In spite of the progress made in the last decades, serious inequalities between men and women still exist in many areas of social life.

Women represent 70% of poor people and own just 1% of the world’s wealth.

Two thirds of illiterate people of the world are women. It is difficult for them to attend school and finish their studies.

On average, a woman earns 25% less than a man earns in the same position.

Women represent 50% of AIDS cases in the world. This percentage goes up to 58% in Africa. The probability of a woman being infected by a man is 4 times higher than a man being infected by a woman.

Women and girls are the main victims of physical and sexual violence. The aggressors are usually people they know.

Women are also the main victims of moral and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Source: Amnesty International
Trade unions exist in a rapidly evolving world. The globalizing economies of the world have substantially changed the organization of work - in this context, women have higher levels of participation in the labor market; however, their participation remains unstable.

In these circumstances, trade unions must be prepared to adapt their policies and actions to this evolving reality in order to ensure the continued effectiveness of any organizing and unionizing activity as a response to the ongoing challenges affecting workers.

Technological revolution (advances in telecommunications, information and transportation)
Opening of international commerce
Creation of international commerce networks
Modification of work organization
Decentralization and flexibilization
Search for a higher return in countries with cheap labor
More specialized tasks
More sub-contracting and outsourcing
Increase in temporary work
Increase of female labor in informal work, temporary work, etc.
Increase of migrant workers
Women get less training and have therefore less chances of getting decent work
Pay gap between men and women
Women are less organized in trade unions
Lower membership amongst women
Need for action
1. Being informed

before acting

Gather information on the labor situation in your sector. Include male and female informal workers. Draft a list with the identified issues classifying them by gender, age, type of work. Write them on cards.

Group work
Make a list of the recruitment and organizing actions carried out by your union and classify them by gender, age, type of work. Write them on cards.

Place lists in visible spot (e.g. a board) on two columns and try to link the issues to relevant actions.

Analyze and discuss with your work group what modifications need to be adopted to address issues and groups identified in the previous study.

Draft a report on the conclusions of your study. It will be used as material to develop more efficient organizing and recruitment policies.

Lists may be left on the board or be set aside for further activities or discussions.

Proposed questions:

What sort of work do my current as well as potential affiliates carry out? Is it formal, informal, in outsourcing companies, multinationals? What are their challenges? Are they the same for men, women and young workers?

What types of activities does my union organize for affiliates? Are they the same for men, women, young and informal workers? Does my union organize recruitment campaigns? To whom are they addressed? What challenges do they face and how do they address them?
One of the obstacles to affiliation and active participation of workers in trade unions is the lack of information on the benefits of affiliating to a union.

Ask the participants to share their experiences and discuss the measures taken by their unions to improve workers’ participation and affiliation.

With the information gathered, prepare an organizing campaign or plan.

Proposed questions:

Do workers know the benefits of joining a union?
How does my organization inform workers about the benefits (meetings, campaigns, emails)?
Do we reach most workers or just a reduced group?
Are informal, migrant, women and young workers included?
Is the information provided clear and complete?
Does it deal with workers’ issues or is it too general?
What other alternatives may be used?
What are the main obstacles to the participation of workers?
What can my union do to change this situation?
The main challenge to achieving gender equality is the modification of cultural conventions. Each society defines what being a man or a woman means differently. This is linked to deep-rooted cultural structures that define power relationships. It is these same structures which prejudices our actions and understanding of the world, and is instrumental in promoting discrimination and exclusion.

These conventions assign specific roles and attitudes to life as “natural”. This way, men are defined from childhood as strong, independent, active and not expressive. Thus, when they reach adulthood, men become responsible for providing money, being successful outside the family, etc. Women, on the contrary, are defined by their sensitivity, their natural skills for motherhood, and their self-control. Their social role has therefore been relegated to the family, children upbringing, etc.

Both notions are created by society and have an impact on all dimensions of life, conditioning men and women’s actions and wishes. For example, men who are not able to provide for their families feel they are a failure; maternity is considered a duty for women; some jobs are considered to be only for women or for men.

Understanding that our definitions of the world are not “normal” or “natural” but a series of socially created conceptions is the first step for change. Revising the established conventions and relations in our organizations is fundamental to include a gender perspective.

Sex and gender

The concept of sex refers to biological differences between men and women. Gender, however, is a social concept determined by each society, culture and historical circumstances. It defines roles, skills and attitudes thus shaping each person’s social identity and making them a member of society.
3- How do we see ourselves?

Form two working groups, one with men and the other with women. Each group will discuss and make a list of characteristics (no more than 10) commonly associated to men and women in their society.

A member of each group will read the list to the rest and then a common list will be drafted. This list should be kept in a visible place to be used by participants in other activities.

Proposed questions:

What kind of personality or attitude is a man to exhibit to be held in high regard in my society? And a woman? Are there any activities considered specific to each gender? Which are they? Are there any expressions or ways of talking that devalue the image of women? And that of the men’s image?
Make a list of characteristics associated to each gender in your society. Mark two columns on a board, one with the sentence “You can’t because you are a woman” and another with the sentence “You can’t because you are a man.” All participants will share a moment in their childhood and a moment in their adulthood when they were forced to stop doing something because of their gender.

Afterwards, you will discuss the changes experienced in the course of time and the role of family, school and institutions in the definition of each gender.
Cultural values are acquired during childhood and determine our attitudes towards life. Likewise, organizations and institutions, whether they are related to corporations, the state or trade unions, have a series of particular and very deep-rooted values and conventions regarding their actions.

As organizations have social relations structured by rules and contracts, we could say that they are small scale societies with their own social imaginations and their roles assigned to each member.

Even though cultural conventions in societies tend to be mirrored in organizations, it is possible to modify them.

Trade unions were born as societies formed by men and they often praise masculinity within their structures even in cases where the majority of members are women. This results in exclusion, lack of participation and discrimination, which are detrimental to any possible actions to achieve gender equality.

Discrimination

As the concept of gender is socially created it is consequently vague and varies depending on the society and historical circumstances. The discriminating attitudes are also different.

Gender discrimination implies the prioritization of one gender over another resulting in specific power relationships.

Direct discrimination exists when women are denied rights, freedoms or social benefits for the simple fact of being women. Indirect discrimination, which is more subtle, exists when equality cannot be achieved due to historical deep-rooted cultural structures and social practices even though there are equal rules for both genders. Equality exists formally but not in practice. This kind of discrimination is also called institutional discrimination.
Distribute the following lists of statements to the group. Once the questionnaire has been answered, discuss each statement with the rest of participants; setting out their causes and analyzing how they contribute to gender discrimination.

Draft a report setting out the conclusions of the debate and the changes that should be implemented within the organization to promote gender equality.

1. Gender issues are a priority for the organization. True - False
2. Bargaining teams include men and women. True - False
3. Women do not stand for election of high positions. True - False
4. Election rules provide equal access to high positions to all members. True - False
5. There is a minimum quota of women participation in committees or decision-making bodies. True - False
6. The statutes establish rules that promote the inclusion of women in the institutional structure but they are not respected. True - False
7. There are training courses on gender issues for all leaders (men and women). True - False
Before we integrate a different approach into the group of activities and policies of the organization, we need to understand that gender is a socially created notion and revise critically these conceptions and the conditions they bring about. In sum, we need to integrate a gender perspective that advocates equality.

This integration implies:

- To establish a strategy to achieve equality in all social fields and dimensions.

- To understand that the lack of gender equality is not only a “women’s” issue but a problem that affects societies as a whole and their development.

- To analyze the organization’s structure to eliminate barriers towards equality.

- To train leaders (men and women) on gender issues so that they become trainers.

- To inform and raise the awareness of the rest of social actors.

- To create women committees and networks so that they may make their own problems visible.
Planning is a strategic process whereby certain actions are carried out to solve a problem or change a situation in certain way. The process needs to be constantly evaluated to correct its course or reinforce the actions. The evaluation of results of any action taken will result in the identification of new problems, which will lead to more actions. It is a participatory process as it requires the collaboration and viewpoints of all actors involved, whether they are the planners or the beneficiaries.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective into the planning of institutional actions does not mean drafting the same series of rules to be applied to everybody. This kind of strategy is often not complied with by societies with deep-rooted cultural attitudes and become a dead letter: a purely formal equality.

It is not useful either to import formulas from other societies as gender is a socially created notion and each culture has particular gender conditioning factors.

Planning with an integrated gender perspective implies the development of strategic actions, according to the needs and differences between men and women. This way, each society and organization will find different problems in each of the groups.

The aim of these actions is to modify in the course of time the social relations between the two genders and make them equal.
The analysis and definition of challenges are fundamental in this process and represent its first step. We must know in depth the reality that needs to be changed and precisely identify the existing challenges.

We must take into account that defining a problem implies making evaluations which entail a particular kind of solution. For example, understanding the low level of participation of women in a union due to a lack of statutory opportunities may be one assessment, understanding it as lack of interest may be another.

Once the challenges have been determined, an action plan will be drafted. This plan will fix the objectives and the activities to be implemented in order to achieve the goals, taking into account their feasibility in terms of time and available resources. There will be regular evaluations during its implementation with a view to planning again.
6- A challenge

Divide the working group into three groups and distribute a document with the proposed scenario. Each group will explain on a sheet of paper the challenges identified and three activities to resolve them.

Following this, a member of each group will share the work with the rest of the groups. An open discussion will follow.

“The union X represents 5000 workers in the textile industry in a city. Sixty five per cent of its affiliates are women over 25 years old who work full time.

In order to increase the participation of affiliates, especially female affiliates, four meetings were organized in the headquarters of the organization, once every two weeks. The aim was to discuss the challenges workers face and plan new actions to solve them.

At the beginning of the month, a sign with the dates and times of the 4 meetings was placed on the notices boards of all companies with affiliates in the union. Meetings took place on Monday around 18.30.

After two months, the participation of the meetings was evaluated. The average of participants was 100 people per meeting, of which less than 10% were women. Most participants were men in high and supervision positions.

The union is studying the continuation of these meetings.”
Introducing a gender perspective in our society requires a critical look at ourselves and the rules that we abide by. It is a process that will require efforts and work from all actors involved.

To carry out strategic actions to achieve gender equality, we must analyze our social world and identify the challenges we need to tackle. It does not only require eliminating more visible discriminating attitudes but dealing with deep-rooted inequalities. These inequalities are the ones that tend to escape our notice.

Narrowing our views

Each society and culture determine what a man and a woman should be, attributing to each gender an array of attitudes, roles and characteristics which are accepted by that society or culture. These norms are not formally registered; they are adopted by each social individual and condition their practices and their role in the world. Therefore, unconsciously, we deem these attitudes to be “normal”.

To be aware of the norms that regulate us and analyze them as a social construct enables us to modify them. Such differences are not perse negative as each individual is different. We must look for those differences that create hierarchies, devalues, discriminates and make us unequal.

Things we should take into account:

**Recognition**: are men and women valued equally in the work place, or is the work and opinion of one of them more valued?

**Rewards**: Is the work carried out by men and women rewarded equally?

**Resources**: Do men and women have access to the same opportunities to develop their skills in society? (By opportunities we understand money, time, and training)

**Rights**: Do men and women have the same rights and freedoms? Is it possible for them to exercise these freedoms or are they merely formal?

**Spheres for participation**: Do they have equal spheres for participation, or are there specific spheres socially reserved to women or men?
In spite of changes and progress made in the situation of women in the last decades, family-related tasks such as house chores, taking care of children and old people continue to be a woman’s natural responsibility even though they are now part of the labor market. This doubles the amount of work for women.

Non-remunerated domestic work, devalued in many societies, hinders the access of women to remunerated jobs. Men, socially defined as the bread-earners, barely participate in these tasks.

This often causes women to look for part-time jobs, informal jobs, work from home, and less demanding jobs as they have to divide their time between remunerated and non-remunerated work.

Men, on the contrary, have better opportunities to develop professionally as they do not spend part of their time dealing with domestic chores. However, their social role forces them to work longer hours, do double shifts or have several jobs to earn more money.

In some cases, the economic situation has aggravated this kind of inequality. In many countries, men are unemployed and women provide the only income in the family. This causes a feeling of failure amongst men as they understand that being manly means financially supporting their family.

On the other hand, the increase in migrant work has lead to millions of split families.

These types of challenges must be taken into account by unions and states when they negotiate with employers. Leisure time, maternity and paternity leaves, nursery service, and more flexible working shifts will help reach a task balance and lighten the pressures that both men and women experience.
Form four groups. Two groups will work with card A and two with card B.

One group will role play the situation described in the card in the way that is considered to be “normal”; the other group will do the same but modifying certain attitudes by applying gender equality.

The group will then discuss the differences.

7. Roles

It’s dinner time. A man and a woman are back from work (or you could decide one works and the other one doesn’t), and their sons and daughters are back from school. What is each of them doing at this moment? Which tasks is each of them in charge of? How are the tasks distributed? How does each of the family members react when they are given a task? Do they carry them out in the end?

It’s Christmas. A man and a woman are choosing the presents for their sons and daughters. What toys do they choose for the sons and which ones for the daughters? They ask the shop assistant and other customers for advice. What do they think of the parents’ choices? How do they decide how much money they are spending?
Hierarchization and gender inequality is very obvious in the labor market. The difference in resources and the assignment of roles limit women’s possibilities to choose decent and well-paid jobs.

Thus, men are assigned the work that is considered “hard” or “dirty”. The arbitrary nature of this statement can be found in the food industry where women, who are the majority, carry out hard work. Men, due to their gender role, are hired for more dangerous jobs thus representing a higher percentage of victims of industrial accidents compared to women.

On the other hand, as a result of gender-specific work, women continue working in agriculture and family businesses without being paid as these tasks are part of a private or family dimension.

Jobs for migrant workers are usually in the less regulated sectors exposing them more to exploitation and unequal treatment (i.e. domestic workers).

The majority of informal workers are women. They have little legal protection and are poorly paid. Even women who take on higher positions continue to have lower salaries than their male peers.

Due to training gaps, women are not able to gain access to specialized jobs with higher salaries and better professional opportunities.

Finally, we should stress the little recognition given to jobs typically associated to women, including domestic work.

Trade unions must work on different approaches to redress such imbalances:

**Organizing**: male and female workers need to be more organized in order to be able to better negotiate with employers.

**Training**: train and inform leaders as well as male and female workers about the benefits of unionizing and gender issues.

**Promoting and creating women’s committees**: women’s issues are best defined by women themselves. The same can be applied to youngsters.

**Including maternity and paternity clauses in negotiations**: this will assist in redressing the imbalances as regards tasks and responsibilities at home.

**Taking into consideration equal opportunities**: job interviews and recruitment techniques may limit the access of women to certain positions; the same applies to job promotions in companies. We should demand egalitarian and transparent practices.
Bring to the workshop the job ads in the newspaper from your city or region.

Distribute them amongst the members of the group and ask them to read them carefully. Each participant must find an ad that he/she finds interesting.

The participants will then discuss the different jobs offered and whether they are associated to one gender.

Questions:

What types of jobs are exclusively offered to women and exclusively offered to men?
Are there different requirements?
What are these requirements related to (training, age, civil status, physical appearance)?
Are there any requirements that are only mentioned in jobs where they ask for women?
Hierarchy based on gender, which is socially and culturally created, supports certain power relationships. Every power relation is asymmetric by nature, that is, one of the parties has power whilst the other doesn’t. When we talk about power, we define a possibility on the one hand (to be able to do, to be able to say, to be able to quit), and a mandate on the other hand (to order and obey).

In general, men are more valued in society than women. This unbalanced situation is present in many areas of social life and may lead to physical, verbal or psychological violence.

Sexual harassment is a kind of violence that intimidates, humiliates and affects somebody else’s dignity through a use/abuse of power.

Socially-created power relations based on gender are reinforced by power and hierarchy relationships existing between bosses and subordinates. This is why women represent the majority of sexual harassment victims and the workplace is one of the contexts where it occurs.

**Sexual harassment in the workplace**

It is a non-consensual behavior of sexual nature, which the victim perceives as a condition to keeping his/her job or which creates a hostile, intimidating or humiliating work environment. It includes physical contact, sexual insinuations, comments and jokes of sexual content, display of pornographic material or inappropriate comments on somebody’s appearance.

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**Effects**

Sexual harassment victims suffer psychological violence and sometimes physical violence. This humiliating situation causes all kinds of symptoms that affect the victim’s physical and emotional health.

For example:
- Feelings of insecurity, anxiety, distress, disgust, vulnerability, rage and impotence
- Physical and emotional stress
- Muscle spasms, digestive problems, headaches, irritability, insomnia, anxiety and depression

**How to react**

Many countries have legislation on this subject. However, one of the obstacles in this kind of situation is the fear of victims to report the aggressors. They are afraid of losing their job or giving a bad impression, taking into account that the perpetrator has the power to fire or calumniate them.

Therefore, unions must look at the working conditions of men and women workers and provide them with the means and support to report and punish the perpetrator in a situation like this. Training and information on the subject will be very useful.
9. Harassment

Share your experiences of harassment with the rest of the group.

Discuss and plan future actions that the union can undertake to deal with sexual harassment.
As with many other social notions, the concept of health has changed throughout the years. In its negative definition, it is the “absence of disease”, or in its positive definition such as proposed by the World Health Organization is “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being”. This concept of health emphasizes not only the physical aspects but also the social and personal ones.

Gender roles may affect men and women's health as they affect men and women's physical, mental and social well-being.

In the case of men, the definition of their social role as bread-earners causes them some physical and mental disorders when they are unable to objectively fulfill this role (e.g. they are unemployed or feel displaced socially or economically by women). Furthermore, the idea that men must carry out hard or risky work increases the incidence of industrial accidents.

In the case of women, we should pay attention to reproductive health, maternity and contracting sexually transmitted diseases issues such as HIV/AIDS.

Men have a fundamentally dominating role in sex. Concepts such as pride, manliness and the right of a man to have sexual relations whenever he wants limit the woman's possibilities to freely decide whether she wants to have sexual relationships, negotiate the use of preservative, and make decisions regarding maternity. In addition, in certain societies men are encouraged to have several sexual partners. Therefore, there is limited protection of women from unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and situations of violence and abuse.

These attitudes increase the number of HIV/AIDS cases all over the world. Women are often more vulnerable and represent the majority of people living with HIV/AIDS in regions such as Africa.

For all these reasons, it is necessary to train and inform workers with a view to changing these attitudes based on gender roles. Trade unions can contribute by informing and educating men and women workers to promote equality and health.
Have a working group discussion and draft a plan to address HIV/AIDS and safe sex in your organization.

Questions:
- Is there any information on the risks of non-protected sex?
  - If so, why are there still high-risk behaviors?
  - How can this challenge be tackled?
- Are there any sexual and reproductive education programs in your country, region, and/or city?
  - How can the union help improve this education?
  - What are the fundamental topics that should be addressed?
Key ILO conventions on equality between male and female workers*

- The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 C111 is one of the most widely ratified conventions. It asks Member States to formulate and enforce a national policy that promotes equal opportunities and treatment in the field of employment and occupation with the aim of eliminating any kind of discrimination.

- The Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 C100 deals specifically with the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value.

- The Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 C156 deals with the issues of men and women workers with responsibilities in relation to their dependent children and other members of their immediate family who clearly need their care or support.

- The Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 C183 deals with maternity leave and rights, the protection of employment and other issues related to non-discrimination.

(*) You can find the link to download these conventions in the resources section.
Resources

Amnesty International
http://www.amnesty.org/

The Inter-American Centre for Knowledge Development in Vocational Training (CINTERFOR)
Gender, training and work:

United Nations INSTRAW
Website with information on gender and training created by the United Nations. Training material.

International Labor Organization (ILO)
Resource Guide - Gender equality in the world of work:
Selected ILO Conventions and Recommendations Promoting Gender Equality:

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)
http://www.unfem.org/

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/

United Nations Women Watch
Information and resources on gender equality and women empowerment. Information on the UN system.
Topics: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/topics/
Resources

Engender Health
Health, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and gender equality topics.

SWAA
Association of Women with HIV/AIDS in Africa: http://www.swaainternational.org/

International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics
http://www.iknowpolitics.org/

World Health Organization (WHO)
Gender and health